Past Pursuits

A Newsletter of the Special Collections Division of the Akron-Summit County Public Library

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Old Buchtel Hall

by Michael Elliott, Public Service Assistant

Buchtel Hall opened in 1872 on the site of the former Spicer Hill Cemetery. From the General Photograph Collection, c. 1890s.

The funeral procession crept slowly up Buchtel Ave. (then Middlebury St.) and stopped at the crest of the hill. Their destination was the Spicer Hill burial ground in use since at least 1813 and with the exception of the Middlebury cemetery Akron's earliest cemetery. Positioned on the highest portion of the property owned by early Akron settler Miner Spicer, the site was presumably chosen with the thought that the elevation would guarantee good drainage. However, experience would show that this was not the case as the composition of the earth proved to make digging graves by hand difficult. Worse, the high content of shale and clay in the soil caused the gravesites to retain water, the effect being not unlike a bathtub. Not surprisingly, no one was pleased at this situation, and the majority of families elected to have their loved ones interred in the Akron Rural Cemetery (better known as Glendale) after its establishment in 1838. Shortly after Spicertown was annexed to Akron in 1865, the abandonment of the Spicer Cemetery was seriously discussed, and indeed, in the years immediately following the Civil War, a few bodies were transferred by friends and family to Glendale. The closing of the cemetery was publicly announced on February 18, 1870 in the *Akron Daily Beacon*. Meanwhile events were rapidly unfolding that would ensure a much different use for the site. (continued on page 8)

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Coming Soon: Digital Access to Summit County Vital Records

by Judy James, Manager

At its annual conference in July of this year, the National Association of Government Archive and Records Administrators announced that the Probate Division of the Summit County Common Pleas Court was awarded a 2008 grant for the digitization of Summit County marriage, birth, and death records. A free, searchable name index linked to the digital images of the original records will be available to the public through the Probate Court's Web site www.summitohioprobate.com and the grant partners' sites.

Sponsored by Ancestry.com and FamilySearch, this grant, valued at $150,000 will provide digital access to 1840 to 1980 marriage records for over 550,000 individuals, birth records prior to 1908 for over 46,000 individuals, and death records prior to 1908 for over 22,000 individuals. It is expected that on-site digitization at the courthouse will commence by the end of 2008, with completion in 2009. Summit County Probate Court Judge Bill Spicer is quoted in the current issue of *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter:*

"As a result of the grant, our Web site, which was chosen as one of the 10 best in the country by the National College of Probate Judges, will now have the added distinction of being a model for the state and country for accessing historical court records," said Judge Spicer. "Not only will it improve access, but by reducing the need to see the often-fragile originals, it will make the court's job of preserving hundreds of thousands of original records easier. The project is a far-sighted and important effort in preserving local history. On behalf of the court and the citizens of Summit County, I thank the project sponsors for selecting Summit County Probate Court as its 2008 grant recipient."

Congratulations to Judge Spicer and the Summit County Probate Court, and especially to Records Room Supervisor Kim Guldeman, who prepared the grant application with the assistance of Lois Noirot, Judge Spicer's secretary.

Kin Behavin' Badly

by Iris Bolar, Librarian

"Black sheep" - those characters that show up in family trees. No, not all of our ancestors were the pillars of society or hardworking laborers and farmers of our expectations. Family legends have blurred the facts surrounding a few of these kinfolk, while shame has banished others from family recollections. Ever-increasing interest in genealogy has encouraged access to information about some of our black sheep relatives. Along with these efforts, Special Collections is pleased to announce the arrival of the *Ohio State Penitentiary Prisoner Registers* (*1829-1938*) as a new resource in our collection.

The first Ohio Penitentiary was a three-storied, 13-celled structure on the corner of Main and Second Streets in Columbus. The state eventually built a much larger facility in Columbus in 1834. A section for female inmates was added a few years later. Well-known prisoners who called the Ohio Pen home included George "Bugs" Moran, William Sydney Porter (aka O. Henry), members of John Dillinger's gang, and Dr. Sam Sheppard. The building closed in 1984 although most prisoners had been transferred to the new Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville after its opening in 1972. The old penitentiary was finally demolished in the late 1990s, and a new Ohio State Penitentiary was opened in Youngstown to house the state's most dangerous criminals.

The prisoner registers are divided by ranges of years with name indexes at the beginning of each range. Records from 1829 to 1913 include the prisoner's name, aliases, age, race, crime, term of sentence, month and year of trial, date received into the penitentiary, date of expected release, parole, transfers, execution, birth location, occupation, education, physical description, temperament, habits, marital status and other notes. In addition, the name and address of a relative is included. The information after 1913, unfortunately, excludes the personal data. Women are included in early records; the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville was built in 1913.

Indexing style for these records varies. Earlier indexes only provide the page for a record and note if a person is not Caucasian. Later, names are indexed in columns labeled A, E, I, O, U, Y. Though not consistent, surnames starting with the same letter are together, but the column in which a name is listed depends on the first vowel in the surname. Example: Anderson and Allen would be together under the A's in the "E" column, and Sanders and Schwann would be under the S's in the "A" column. Another method simply indexes by the first letter of the surname and includes entry number, page for record, and county of sentence.

As with all old records, earlier entries are handwritten and can be difficult to read. Darkness in some spots on the microfilm can also make viewing difficult. Regardless, this collection of records is a goldmine of information about some of our lawless Ohio ancestors.

The Ohio Historical Society houses old records from the state's correctional facilities. The Society's records beyond Special Collections' holdings include: Ohio State Penitentiary (1829-1973); Ohio Reformatory (1896-1968); Ohio Reformatory for Women (1913-1942); London, Ohio Prison Farm (1908-1949); and records of the Boys and Girls Industrial Schools for juvenile offenders. An index to admission records of the Boys and Girls Industrial Schools is searchable at www.ohiohistory.org/resource/database/industrial. Years indexed are 1869 to 1943 for the girls' school and 1858 to 1944 for the boys' school. Many, but not all, state correctional records have been microfilmed and are available to view at the Ohio Historical Society.

Records of inmates incarcerated since 1973 are held by the Central Inmate Records Division of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC). Brief records and photos of inmates currently incarcerated or under department supervision are viewable on the ODRC Web site at www.drc.ohio.gov/OffenderSearch/Search.aspx. Headshot photographs of Ohio's executed prisoners from 1897 to present can be viewed at www.drc.state.oh.us/web/Executed/executed01.htm.

Some additional sites to explore:

Black Sheep Ancestors
blacksheepancestors.com

Prisons, Prisoners & Outlaws at *Cyndi's List*
www.cyndislist.com/prisons.htm

Ancestor Hunt's Genealogical Prison Records
www.ancestorhunt.com/genealogical_prison_records.htm.

Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913
www.oldbaileyonline.org/index.jsp

Summit Memory Updates

Metro Parks Serving Summit County has joined the Summit Memory Project, contributing the Joseph Jesensky Collection. Joe Jesensky was a well known local naturalist whose art work focused on the natural beauty of the Cuyahoga Valley.

The Barberton Public Library has added a second collection, the Anna Dean Farm. This collection of 35 images provides a glimpse into the 20th Century farm built by O.C. Barber and named for his daughter Anna and her husband, Dr. Arthur Dean Bevan.

The library has added two more collections; the Jewish Community Board of Akron Collection and the Trucking History Collection were both drawn from larger collections donated to the library. The Jewish Community Board of Akron Collection contains images capturing the vibrant Jewish community in Akron. The images in the Trucking History Collection celebrate the birth of the motor carrier industry here in Akron.

The Summit Memory Project also offers RSS Feeds. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication, and it allows us to notify people when new partners or new collections are added to www.SummitMemory.org. If you are not familiar with RSS Feeds, you can learn more about them at www.whatisrss.com/. If you are using Internet Explorer 7.0, which has a built in feed reader, you can read our updates by selecting the RSS feed link from Summit Memory.

Medina County Probate Records Now Available

Our goal of acquiring probate records for all counties surrounding Summit County has been fulfilled through a generous gift from the Summit County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society. At its monthly meeting on October 18, the Chapter presented eleven microfilm rolls of Medina County marriage records, 1818-1965 to Special Collections. This donation completes our collection of Medina County probate records which also includes birth records for 1867-1908 and death records for 1867-1965.

This resource will greatly enhance our local vital record collection and will be especially useful for researchers who are seeking records for those areas of Summit County that were once part of Medina County prior to the creation of Summit County in 1840.

We are most grateful to the Summit County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society for this gift, as well as for their continued support.

Ohio Births 1959-1996

Special Collections now has the Ohio births and supplemental births indexes from 1959-1996 loaded on our CD-Rom machine. Births for the years 1963, 1969 and 1972 are not included in the regular indexes, but there are entries for those years in the supplemental index.

These indexes are arranged much like those for Ohio deaths. They show the date of birth, last name, first name, and middle initial of the child, a location code (these are the same codes used in the death indexes, and a key is provided), maiden name of the mother, volume number, and certificate number. You may search the indexes by date, last name of child, or maiden name of mother.

The CD-Rom machine is a personal computer in the Special Collections Division that is dedicated to providing access to our growing collection of information available only on CD-Rom.

Dearest Peg: A Love Story in Long-Lost Letters

by Jane Gramlich, Librarian

Three years ago, as my husband and I were remodeling our 80-year-old North Hill bungalow, we found all kinds of great old-house artifacts. We gathered things like broken 78 rpm records, playing cards stuck behind cabinet shelves, chunks of horsehair plaster, and strips of hideous red and beige plaid wallpaper that had been covered up for years. (Did people really once think that was attractive?) But the best thing we discovered was a love story.

"You'll never guess what I found," he told me on the phone one day. "I was tearing out the kitchen ceiling, and these two pieces of paper fell out from up in the attic. They look like letters. They're in envelopes."

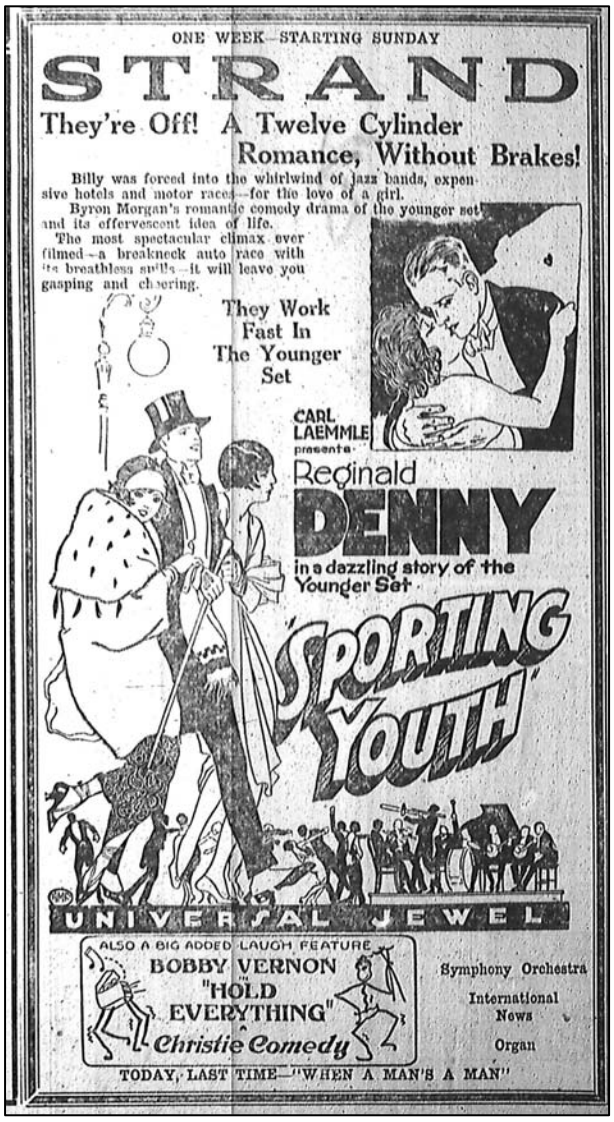
"What do they say?" I asked.

"Well, the paper's turned brown, and the writing's a little faded, but I see a postmark. You won't believe this…one of them says March 17, 1924."

"That's before the house was built," I said. I couldn't wait to get home to read them.

Affixed with a 2-cent stamp, the envelopes were addressed to "Miss Margaret Bly, 230 Ohio Building, City." Inside were neatly folded letters, one dated in January 1924 and sent from the North Hill Station; the other dated in March 1924 and sent from the Grace Park Station. "Dearest Peg," they both began, and both were cryptically signed "Zg." Clearly sent by a lovelorn young man, the first letter implored his sweetheart not to think that his bad mood on their previous date had anything to do with her. "It would be to[o] hard to get peeved at you," he wrote. Rather, he was under a lot of pressure with school and work: "Believe me, Peg, I have been working [so] hard." He ended on a hopeful note, suggesting a get-together in Canton with some friends. "We could take the crowd along and have a great time, anyway you and I could, couldn't we?" The second letter gave us a rare glimpse into how young people in Akron in 1924 were spending their free time. "Tom came down and we went for a ride (the second time I've been in his Ford) and we

played cards for a while." He asked her out to a movie at the Strand Theater: "*Sporting Youth*, they say it's great…listen dear, don't forget to save our night for us so we can go to the show."


ONE WEEK—STARTING SUNDAY
STRAND
They're Off! A Twelve Cylinder Romance, Without Brakes!
Billy was forced into the whirlwind of jazz bands, expensive hotels and motor races—for the love of a girl.
Byron Morgan's romantic comedy drama of the younger set and its effervescent idea of life.
The most spectacular climax ever filmed—a breakneck auto race with its breathless thrills—it will leave you gasping and cheering.
They Work Fast In The Younger Set
CARL LAEMMLE presents
Reginald DENNY
in a dazzling story of the Younger Set
SPORTING YOUTH
UNIVERSAL JEWEL
ALSO A BIG ADDED LAUGH FEATURE
BOBBY VERNON "HOLD EVERYTHING"
Christie Comedy
Symphony Orchestra
International News
Organ
TODAY, LAST TIME—"WHEN A MAN'S A MAN"

This is an ad for the movie Bernard asked Margaret to see with him. It appeared in the *Akron Beacon Journal* on March 15, 1924.

Someone somewhere might want these wonderful love letters, we thought. Who was "Zg" and who was his "dearest Peg," and why did these letters end up in our attic? Was Peg sentimental about an old boyfriend, or did she finally marry him and live in the house? Luckily, I knew there were some ways to find out.

The first thing to do was to look at the old Akron city directories to see who were the first people to live in the house. The Summit County Fiscal Office says it was built in 1930, but the city directories reveal that the address actually existed by 1928. The resident listed was Bernard Zeisig. That seemed to explain the "Zg." Now, who was Peg, and what happened to them?

We figured that since they would have been young adults in 1924, it wasn't likely both of them were still alive. The next step was to check the Social Security Death Index, which is available online on several different free Web sites and subscription databases, including Ancestry, RootsWeb and Genealogy Bank. The SSDI is a good source if you're looking for the date of death for a person who had a Social Security number and died between 1962 and the present. It helps if you know their last place of residence, especially if the name is common. Fortunately for us, Bernard had an unusual last name and stayed in the area, both of which made it very easy to find him in the index. Another search turned up a Margaret Zeisig who also lived in the area and was born about the same time as Bernard. This was looking promising!

The third step was to check their obituaries to find out if they were ever married and if so, the names of their children or closest relatives. After looking at the *Akron Beacon Journal* obituary index, I found Bernard's obituary on microfilm. Margaret's was even easier to find since it appeared in the online *Akron Beacon Journal* database that begins in 1984. The obituaries confirmed that they had been married, and better still, gave us a stronger sense of this couple and their personalities. Best of all, their children's names and where they lived were listed. We found out that one of their sons, Thomas, had become a priest, and in 1994 was at St. Eugene's Church in Cuyahoga Falls. From there, a simple Internet search brought up the church Web site, and a couple of phone calls later, I found myself talking to a man whose parents' story was partly written in these old letters from our attic.

"I know that address. I grew up in that house," he said. "We moved out in 1945. How did you say you

found the letters?" he asked. Then he paused. "Wait a minute…how did you find *me*?"

I told him that when you work at the library, you learn where to look.

We invited Father Zeisig out to see the house to pick up the letters. It was a delightful visit. He was able to answer some questions about our home that we'd been wondering about. His dad had the house built before he and Margaret were married in 1927, and they raised four children there. Father Zeisig reminisced about the bedroom where he and his brothers had pillow fights, and he described how the vacant lot next door, now our side yard, was where they used to play softball. He confirmed our suspicions that the kitchen once had a breakfast nook, which we wish was still there. Our hardwood floors are in great shape partly because Bernard Zeisig owned a carpet store, and never would have considered bare floors. The family lived there nearly twenty years, and might have stayed longer had it not been for a tragedy. Father Zeisig's younger brother became very ill, and passed away in St. Thomas Hospital in 1945 at the age of ten. In the Irish Catholic tradition of Margaret's family, they held the wake in the living room. The funeral was at St. Martha's Church. The next day, Father Zeisig said, his dad put a "For Sale" sign in the front yard.

Every family has its share of sadness, and I think if walls could talk, they'd acknowledge and mourn the troubles they've seen. But they'd also tell you that the laughter and happy times mean the most and last the longest. Margaret Zeisig knew this, and because of her good memories our walls did talk, telling us about the events that brought her there. Father Zeisig knew it too. He told us that years later, he would drive by the house every so often, and when it was up for sale, he had even considered buying it. We could tell he wanted very much to go back to his childhood home.

I sometimes picture Margaret cleaning out her attic on her way to a new house, going through the letters that meant so much to her. Did she notice that two of them were missing, and wonder what might have happened to them? Could she ever have imagined that they would stay wedged underneath the floorboards of the attic for decades, only to end up right back with the family?

I know it's possible, and I'm glad we made it happen. We're grateful for the wonderful stories we have about the people who first called our house "home."

A New Home for Summit County Historical Society Collections

by Judy James, Manager

When the moving truck pulled into the Library's loading dock one afternoon in August, most of the Special Collections staff waited in eager anticipation to discover its contents. As box after box was unloaded, we felt like treasure hunters who had encountered the mother lode. The Summit County Historical Society's archival collections have found a new home on the third floor of Main Library.

In all, more than two hundred boxes made their way onto the shelves of our climate-controlled stacks in Special Collections. Names like Perkins, Alexander, and Pockrandt grace the labels of many boxes. In addition to books, documents, manuscripts, and other archival materials, the collection includes thousands of photographs and glass plate negatives which document our community's rich history.

Since our goal, and that of the Historical Society, is to share and provide access to these unique materials, we have made processing these collections a priority. This will entail re-housing many items in archival enclosures and boxes, as well as the creation of records for our Local History Database, www.akronlibrary.org/DBS/SpecColldbO/Default.aspx. We also expect that many items will make their way into the Summit Memory Project, www.SummitMemory.org, our online "scrapbook" of Summit County history.

We are honored that the Summit County Historical Society has chosen the library as the repository for these important materials, and applaud them for their goal of sharing them with the community.

Akron's Jewish Community

by Cheri Goldner, Librarian

"...one of the most striking features in connection with Akron Jewry is the spirit of thorough-going communal co-operation which prevails; regardless of one's shade of Jewish belief in the matter of Judaism when the heart-appeal is made all meet on the common ground as Jews and work in harmonious spirit that could well be emulated by others who preach harmony and practice dissention, discord and factionalism." from an editorial by Charles H. Joseph in Pittsburgh's The Jewish Criterion, February 18, 1919

While no one claims to know the exact date that the first Jewish family arrived in Akron, historians agree that the city had Jewish residents in the 1840s and 1850s. In its 1919 issue featuring Akron's Jewish community, *The Jewish Criterion* noted that there was "sufficient evidence" of Jews living in Akron prior to 1842 and that by 1850, Jewish families were gathering frequently in their homes for various social and religious purposes. Local historian Samuel L. Lane, in his *Fifty Years and Over of Akron and Summit County*, states that Hebrew merchants were doing business in Akron as early as 1845. Helga Kaplan, whose 1978 doctoral dissertation is titled *Century of Adjustment: A History of the Akron Jewish Community, 1865-1975*, points to Koch-Levey & Co.'s 1858 establishment of Hopfman & Moss clothing store as an important date in Akron's early Jewish history.

One date local historians do agree on is 1865, the year that a small group of Jewish immigrants signed the constitution establishing the Akron Hebrew Association. This organization was formed to serve the community's needs to gather for worship, educate children in the faith, and socialize. It was forerunner to Temple Israel, a reform congregation established in 1885 in the former St. Paul's Episcopal Church on South High Street that then moved to its present synagogue at 133 Merriman Road in 1911.

The immigrants who formed the Akron Hebrew Association were Ashkenazic Jews, also known as Ashkenazi Jews or Ashkenazim, meaning that their ancestors were from Central Europe, more specifically from the medieval Jewish communities of the Rhineland in the west of Germany. Ashkenazic Jews are distinguished from Sephardic or Hispanic Jews, whose ancestors originated in the Iberian Peninsula in the extreme southwest of Europe, which includes present day Spain, Portugal, Andorra, Gibraltar and a small part of France.

The formation of the Akron Hebrew Association in 1865 marks the beginning of the first of four historical periods in local Jewish community life that Kaplan identifies in her dissertation, a copy of which is available in Special Collections. Kaplan also provides a historical overview and timeline on the Jewish Community Board of Akron's Web site, where she notes that Akron's Jewish population in 1881, near the end of this first period, was about 175.

The "pioneering period" ended in 1885, and was followed by a time of great expansion and institutional development within the local community ("internal adjustment") that lasted until 1929. *The Jewish Criterion* identified 40 active Jewish organizations and two prospective organizations when it published its Akron feature in 1919. Significant events for the local Jewish community during this period include the arrival of department store founder Abraham Polsky in 1885 and the subsequent establishment of the first congregation; the formation of the Anshe Sfard (which is still Akron's Orthodox congregation), Workman's Circle and Ahavas Zedek congregations in the 1910s; the publication of the first local Jewish newspaper, the *Akron Jewish Observer*, in 1928; the 1929 opening of the Akron Jewish Center at 220 South Balch Street; and the beginning of the "Wooster Avenue hey days" for the Jewish community, when the Lane-Wooster area had the largest concentration of Jews in Akron, at least three synagogues and many Jewish-owned businesses.

The third historical period for the local Jewish community that Kaplan identifies, from 1929-1945, saw a shift from internal development toward communal survival in the face of great external

pressures, namely, the Great Depression and World War II.

Finally, there was the post-war period of 1945-1975, which was characterized by movement to the suburbs, consolidation of religious institutions, and incorporation into the community. Significant events within this time period include the formation of the Beth El Congregation on South Hawkins in 1946 (one of Akron's four active congregations and the only Conservative one), the relocation of the Akron Jewish Center from Balch Street just north of South Maple out onto White Pond Drive, and the creation in 1970 of the Akron Jewish Community Federation, which was later absorbed by the Jewish Community Board of Akron, Inc.

In the time since Kaplan's study ended, Akron's Jewish community has seen many more changes. Among these are the opening of the Akron Jewish Community High School in 1976; the establishment of the Akron area's second reform congregation, Temple Beth Shalom, in Hudson in 1977; and the 1999 formation of the Jewish Community Board of Akron, Inc., which absorbed the Akron Jewish Community Federation and serves as the umbrella for the Shaw Jewish Community Center of Akron, Jerome Lippman Jewish Community Day School and Jewish Family Service.

Being aware of the different historical periods and significant dates within the history of the local Jewish community, as well as broader immigration patterns, can be helpful when researching Jewish families. Special Collections has a variety of sources to help you get started in that research. Among our general sources are reference books and circulating handbooks on doing Jewish genealogy and visiting Jewish cemeteries, including a few titles dealing specifically with Sephardic or Ashkenazic genealogy.

We also have a variety of local resources that may be helpful if your family has lived in the area for a while. These include the previously mentioned 1919 issue of *The Jewish Criterion*, which includes biographical and genealogical information on a number of prominent Jews and may be found on our online books webpage. Another of our local sources available online is a selection of photographs from the collection of the Jewish Community Board of Akron at www.SummitMemory.org.

Additional resources available here at the library include our news clipping files, the pictorial publication *Jewish Life in Akron*, Akron Jewish Center yearbooks from the 1970s, and issues of the monthly publication *Akron Jewish News* dating from 1962 to the present. While early issues of this last publication are short (six pages), they contain notices of births, deaths, engagements and marriages, along with news of activities going on at the Center and in other Jewish clubs and organizations. Additional dates for both the Akron Jewish Center yearbooks and the *Akron Jewish News* may be available from the Jewish Community Board of Akron.

For additional guidance, visit JewishGen at www.jewishgen.org and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS), which includes contact information for four member groups in Ohio (Cleveland, Cincinnati, Dayton and Columbus) as well as for groups across the globe at iajgs.org/members/members.html.

Old Buchtel Hall (continued)

In the late 1860s, the Universalist denomination sought to establish a college in Ohio under their auspices. Suitable locations within Ohio were sought, as were startup pledges from those communities being considered. Amongst other sites in the state, Kent was at first proposed but was shortly thereafter ruled out as it was considered to be an "unhealthy place," the area then being a hotbed of "various forms of malarial diseases." Kent having been eliminated from consideration, Rev. H. F. Miller, in his capacity of "scout," visited Akron on February 3, 1870 and was suitably impressed with both the town and the people. Two weeks later, on February 16, the Universalists announced their decision and formally offered the college to Akron.

There were terms and conditions set, of course. To locate at Akron the Universalists needed a promise of $60,000 from the citizens of Summit County and that "suitable lands be pledged." This wasn't as much of a problem as it might seem. Without

hesitation, Akron philanthropist John Buchtel pledged $31,000 with the balance promptly raised by subscription among other leading Akron citizens. An actual building site would not be a problem either as Akron just happened to have the perfect location for the proposed college in the soon-to-be-vacated Spicer Hill Cemetery. This was found agreeable to the local committee and on March 4, 1870, the Spicer Hill Cemetery site was recommended as a suitable spot to build the proposed college.

Shortly afterwards, on May 31, 1870, the college was incorporated, and the newly appointed board of trustees voted to accept the recommendations of the various committees and officially select the cemetery site. At the same meeting it was unanimously decided to name the new college in honor of the respected John Buchtel whose spirit was so greatly admired. The building site was finally official, but first all of the remaining bodies needed to be removed before construction could begin. Removals took place throughout 1870, but a few bodies still remained into calendar year 1871. To expedite this process, an ordinance was passed by city council on February 20, 1871 that decreed all bodies were to be removed by friends, family or by the city no later than April 10 of that year. In this fashion, at least 64 bodies were exhumed and re-interred in Glendale, although it is likely a few others were relocated to other cemeteries. Early in March of 1871, the site was declared cleared, a pronouncement that was certainly not accurate as over the years, construction projects have unearthed human remains, proving that a few graves had been missed. The go-ahead having been given, ground was broken on March 15, 1871.

The morning of July 4th, 1871 dawned gray and drizzly, a dreary day and a depressing one too for those witnessing such an important event in Akron's history. This was the day that Horace Greeley, influential editor of the *New York Tribune* came to Akron to assist in the laying of the cornerstone for the building that would become Buchtel College. The soon-to-be candidate for President in 1872 was himself a Universalist and had readily agreed to take part in the ceremonies. Special trains were scheduled into Akron, and on the appointed day, delivered hundreds of people to the city for the festivities. It was later estimated that more than 5,000 visitors were present, including many hundreds from the surrounding countryside all wanting to see Greeley and be present at such a momentous occasion. Fortunately, as the day wore on, the weather cleared and a pleasant time was passed by all with a parade of dignitaries, gun salutes, bands playing, and the formal address by Greeley.

Construction proceeded at a rapid pace, and except for a few minor interior details, was ready to receive students that autumn. The first term began on September 11, 1872, with the building opened to both college and the more numerous prep students. Everyone present agreed that the site selected for the college could hardly have been better as the building occupied a commanding position and was easily the tallest structure in the area dominating the Akron skyline. A massive, handsome building of brick with red trim and sandstone foundations, the overall dimensions measured 240 feet long by 54 feet wide with five stories above ground level. A composite of Norman, Gothic and Doric architecture was employed in the design, which the *Akron Daily Beacon* of June 13, 1872 gushed was "one of the most imposing and beautiful structures in the state of Ohio." There was even an observation deck open to the public that the curious could use to take in the far ranging views of the countryside. Buchtel Hall was the official Akron weather station for many years and citizens could obtain a forecast simply by viewing which and how many flags were flying on the roof of the building.

Within the building could be found quarters for the faculty and staff, including cooks, laundresses, and several other positions. Several professors and officials employed by the college had their families with them and were supplied with generous quarters. Students, meanwhile, were billeted in small spartan rooms which were described misleadingly by the inaugural catalogue as "light, airy and ample, furnished with the most modern and improved conveniences." The arrangement of students (both college and prep) within the building called for

males to be quartered on the east end of the building and females on the west.

Everyday life for students at Buchtel was much more regimented and structured when compared to those of today. Daily chapel was required, and large blocks of time were decreed for study, the amount of which would horrify current students. Even so, time was found for various pranks and frivolous acts that have long been associated with the college scene. At Buchtel this included appropriating a rather large wagon from the street, disassembling it and then reassembling it on the roof. If pouring water down the stairwells onto those standing unaware below had been an Olympic event, Buchtel students would have taken the gold medal. In another incident, a cow was silently led up all five flights of stairs one dark night and left tethered in the attic. She was contentedly chewing her cud when discovered the following morning. Leading her back down the stairs proved to be much more of a challenge. Despite all efforts to guide the bovine intruder back to earth, she stubbornly refused to budge. It was finally necessary to hobble her legs and slide her down planks laid atop the stairs, her loud protestations echoing throughout the hallways.

Now we come to the fateful evening of December 20, 1899. It was the last day of classes before the Christmas break, and comparatively few students, faculty and staff were in the building. Although neighborhood residents later claimed they had smelled pine wood burning for an hour before the fire was discovered, it wasn't reported until an area resident noticed flames breaking through the roof on the east end of the building at about 5:15 pm. An alarm was immediately sent in to the fire department which eventually responded with every available man. The word now out that the building was on fire, students and faculty alike set to work rescuing what they could from the building, taking what they could carry to the neighboring Crouse gymnasium and unceremoniously dumping everything on the floor. Also lending a hand was a sizable number of laborers on their way home after work. That they had pitched in to help was confirmed by the large number of bent and blackened lunchboxes later found in the ruins that they had dropped as they came upon an item to be saved.

Roughly an hour into the blaze, it became apparent that the fire department was having little, if any, success in fighting the advancing flames and the police soon forbade anyone from again entering the building. By 7 pm, the fire was at its height. With the upper floors all blazing furiously, the glow in the nighttime sky drew thousands of Akron residents to the scene. A few short hours later, the building lay completely gutted, a smoldering ruin. Nothing was left standing except for the charred remnants of the exterior walls.

Buchtel Hall following the December 1899 fire. From the Summit County Historical Society Collection.

The cause of the fire would never be determined but was ultimately thought to have been a defective chimney flue. After the pile had cooled, what remained of the walls was pulled down and the debris searched for metal to be sold for scrap. The cut sandstone blocks were set aside to be used in future construction, while the rest of the rubble was simply pushed into the basement. Topsoil was then layered over the entire site, leaving little visual sign of the grand structure that had stood there.

As might be imagined, the effects of the fire were devastating. Amazingly, there were no deaths, and only a few minor injuries were reported. The material losses were another matter. Many items had been saved such as nearly all personal effects, most

of the books from the library, and grade books. Much of the dinnerware was thoughtfully rescued as well by the dining room manager who had hastily scraped the uneaten evening meal from the plates (and onto the floor) and carried them to safety. But gone were the science collections, textbooks, desks, bedding, the original building plans and sundry other items.

The news grew worse when it was discovered that insurance would not even come close to covering the loss. Even so, when the new semester began two weeks later, not a single class needed to be postponed. This was accomplished by partitioning the Crouse gymnasium and making available the President's residence to be used for classrooms. The Prep department students received instruction in nearby buildings. For sleeping arrangements, male students were assigned to area homes, while most females stayed at "Masaldwar" a large private residence turned dormitory on Union St.

There was never any question that the college would be rebuilt, but in what form and where were the questions of the day. *The Beacon* advocated selling both the campus real estate and the athletic field and utilizing those funds to rebuild farther from the center of town. This feeling was apparently backed by at least some of the Trustees. The public's sentiment was otherwise. Because the insurance was insufficient, pledges were taken from Akron citizens, and a sizable fund was soon established. This, along with the insurance money, began the rebuilding process.

It was decided it would be more prudent to construct several buildings with the funds that were available. The decision was also made to begin with a recitation hall that would function as the main campus building but on a smaller scale. Local architect Frank Weary was commissioned, and plans by him were accepted and rushed into construction. Throughout 1900, this "New" Buchtel Hall was built using the foundation stones that had been foresightedly set aside in the salvage operation earlier in the year. It was constructed adjacent to where the original building had stood, the newer building's northwest corner slightly overlapping the footprint of its predecessor. Along with the new Academy for the Prep department, the new Buchtel Hall was completed and opened in 1901. Having been used as classrooms for many years, today Buchtel Hall houses the University Administrative offices.

As you climb the few steps and enter the front doors you stand in the foyer of this historic building. As your eyes adjust to the indoor light immediately on the left can be seen an old stone inscribed in circular fashion bearing the legend "Centenary of Universalism in America, 1870. This stone laid July 4th, 1871." Saved from the ruins of Old Buchtel at the beginning of the last century, it is representative of combining the old and the new, a tangible link to the past.

We would like to thank the following for their generous donations:

Mary Lou Baker for materials from the collection of Charles Astrup

Cuyahoga Portage Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution for book, *Stafford County, Virginia Deed and Will Book Abstract, 1780-1786*

Walter J. Faix for two color photographs of a Corsair airplane, 2008

Debbi Hasty for five maps of Portage Lakes

Jean Heinz for book, *An Akron Boy* by Jean Heinz

Kelly Holderbaum for 1927 Central High School yearbook

Nathalie Ketterer for book, *Count Each Day: A Son's Heroic Journey with ALS* by Nathalie Ketterer

James Kowalcsyk for book, *West Hill Sketchbook* (2 copies)

Janice Lynn Morgan O'Neil for two ledgers containing minutes and founding notes for the Fortnightly Music Club, 1924

Warren Skidmore for programs for Akron Concert Course, YMCA Good Music Club, and Coach House Theater

Donations (continued)

George Washington Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Colonists for book, *The Ladies of the George Washington Chapter of the Daughters of the American Colonists*

Brenda Walko for yearbooks from Our Lady of the Elms and St. Vincent High Schools

More about Union Park

We appreciate feedback about our newsletter and were delighted to receive an email from Jeff Franks regarding the Union Park article in our last issue: http://www.akronlibrary.org/internetresources/sc/pursuits/pursuits7-3.pdf. Jeff, who is an Assistant Professor and head of reference at the University of Akron's Bierce Library, informed us that one of the images featured in the article shows his grandmother Violet Koonce and her brother and sister. Following is the information he provided about them.

The young girl seated with hands clasped at the far right is my grandmother Violet Koonce, age 12. Standing with her right to left, is her brother Howard, age 3 and sister Estelle, age 10. They were three of five children of Grace and Thadeus Koonce. Thadeus was a foreman for the Diamond Rubber Company until 1903, when on a September morning he left for work and was never seen or heard from again. Accounts of his disappearance can be found in the Beacon of that year. Grace was left to raise five children on her own. She received a great deal of help from her mother Susie Hall, also of Akron. At the time of the photo Union Park was very close to their residence at 209 East Mill St. Grace worked a day job, while Violet cared for her younger siblings. As a young teen, Violet began working as a domestic on the west side of Akron. She married an Armenian immigrant, K. H. Andonian and had five children of her own, many of whom, along with their descendents, live in Northeast Ohio today.

Thanks to Jeff, we now know something more about Union Park and the people who lived nearby.

Workshops from Special Collections

Getting Started in Family History
Tuesday, January 6, 6:30 pm
Join us for an orientation for new family historians. Each session will include an overview of the genealogical sources available at the Akron-Summit County Public Library, suggestions for getting started, and tips for organizing your research. This workshop meets in the Special Collections Division—Third Floor, Main Library. For more information and to sign up, contact us at 330.643.9030 or speccollections@akronlibrary.org

Finding Your Family in the Census
Tuesday, February 3, 6:30 pm
United States Census records are rich sources of genealogical information. Join us as we learn more about using these valuable records in your family research. As we will be using electronic resources, basic computer skills are recommended. This workshop meets in Computer Lab 2 - First Floor, Main Library. For more information and to sign up, contact us at 330.643.9030 or speccollections@akronlibrary.org

New to the Collection

Connecticut

Barnes' mortality records of the town of Woodbury: from 1672 to the present day
A directory of Native and African Americans in Windham County, 1650-1900. 2 vols.

District of Columbia

Daily National Intelligencer index, deaths :1855-70
District of Columbia ancestors: a guide to the records of the District of Columbia
District of Columbia death records: August 1, 1874 to July 31, 1879
District of Columbia foreign deaths, 1888-1923
District of Columbia guardianship index, 1802-1928
District of Columbia interments (index to deaths), January 1, 1855 to July 31, 1874
District of Columbia marriage records. 1811-1892
District of Columbia original land owners, 1791-1800

District of Columbia (continued)

The Georgetown Courier marriage & death notices: Georgetown, District of Columbia, Nov. 18, 1865 to May 6, 1876
Georgetown, District of Columbia marriage and death notices, 1801-1838
Index to District of Columbia wills, 1921-1950
William King's mortality books, vol. 2: 1833-1863

Georgia

Cobb County, Georgia cemeteries. 3 volumes

Kentucky

Cemeteries of Adair County, Kentucky. 8 vols.
Cemeteries of Christian County, 1797-2004
Graves County, cemeteries. Multiple vols.
Graves County, cemeteries full name index
Hopkins County, index to white marriages, 1900-49
Hopkins County, non-white marriage index, 1866-1914
Hopkins County, tax list, 1807; marriages 1807-68
Marriage, bond & consent book, Nelson County

Massachusetts

Cemetery inscriptions of Ashburnham
Cemetery inscriptions of Baldwinville & Templeton
Cemetery inscriptions of Hubbardston
Cemetery inscriptions of Phillipston
Cemetery inscriptions of Royalston and South Royalston
Cemetery inscriptions of Westminister

Michigan

Baroda Township (Cemeteries of Berrien County)
Benton Township (Cemeteries of Berrien County)
Calvary Cemetery, Benton Township, Berrien County
Cemetery records of Hagar Township in Berrien
City cemeteries of Saint Joseph (Berrien County)
Eaton County cemeteries, Brookfield Township
Easton County cemeteries, Chester Township
Eaton County cemeteries, Roxand Township
Eaton County cemeteries, Sunfield Township
Eaton County cemeteries, Walton Township
Headstone readings of Bertrand Township cemeteries, Berrien County
Headstone readings of Niles Township cemeteries, Berrien County
History of Lenawee County, 2 vols.
Lake Township (Cemeteries of Berrien County)
Maple Hill Cemetery [Eaton County]
Morton Hill Cemetery (Cemeteries, Berrien County)
New Buffalo Township (Cemeteries, Berrien County)
Riverview (Cemeteries of Berrien County)
Sodus Township (Cemeteries of Berrien County)
Watervliet Township (Cemeteries of Berrien County)
Weesaw Township (Cemeteries of Berrien County)

Mississippi

Cemeteries in Chickasaw and surrounding counties
Tishomingo County cemeteries
Tishomingo County cemeteries: a revised index

New York

Assumption of Mary Parish, Redford: baptisms, 1853-1910; marriages, 1853-1923; burials, 1853-1923 & cemetery records
Church of the Immaculate Conception, Keeseville St. Catherine of Sienna - Mission, Clintonville: 1835-1929 marriages-births-deaths
Coopersville [sic] St. Joseph-du-Corbeau: Baptemes et sepultures (1843-1880). Baptisms and burials
Death records, Orange County: from the mortuary records of 1850, 1806, 1870 and 1880
Descendants of Baileytown: a vanished hamlet in the Ramapos
Goshen Independent Republican marriages notices, 2 vols. 1866-1903
Headstone inscriptions: Clinton County, Revised
Immaculate Heart of Mary (formerly St. Philomena's and St. Bridget's), Churubusco: 1860-1930, marriages-births-deaths
Marriages - marriages (1830-1880), comte de Clinton County [microform] Marriages (1830-1880) Clinton County
Parish St. John the Baptist, Keeseville: baptisms & burials, 1853-1880
St. Anne's Church, Mooers Forks: marriages-baptisms-burials, 1860-1925
St. Augustine's Church, Peru: marriages-births-deaths
St. Mary's Church records, Champlain, Clinton County: 1860-1899

Ohio

Town of Mooers, vital records: births, 1875 - 1959; deaths, 1875 - 1929; marriages, 1875 - 1954
Adams County, Ohio, will book index, 1849-1860
Archaeology of the fort at Greenville, Ohio
Births, marriages and deaths reported in newspapers Berea, Cuyahoga County: Feb. 1879-Dec. 1884
Ghosts of the Magic City
Index of women from early years in southeast Ohio [land records]
Letha E. House: from foundling to philanthropist
A listing of entrymen on lands east of the Scioto River in Franklin County
A listing of entrymen, lands east of the Scioto River in Pickaway County
A listing of entrymen, lands east of the Scioto River in Pike County
A listing of entrymen, lands east of the Scioto River in Ross County
A listing of entrymen, lands east of the Scioto River in Scioto County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Ashland County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Athens County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Belmont County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Carroll County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Columbiana County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Coshocton County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Delaware County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Fairfield County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Gallia County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Guernsey County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Hamilton County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Harrison County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Hocking County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Holmes County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Jackson County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Jefferson County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Knox County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Lawrence County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Licking County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Meigs County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Monroe County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Morgan County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Morrow County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Muskingum County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Noble County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Perry County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Richland County
A listing of entrymen, lands in southeast Ohio
A listing of entrymen, lands in Tuscarawas County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Vinton County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Washington County
A listing of entrymen, lands in Wayne County
A listing of entrymen, lands south of the Connecticut Western Reserve in Mahoning County
A listing of entrymen, lands south of the Connecticut Western Reserve in Summit County

Pennsylvania

Altoona City Hall birth records, 1886-1905
Blair County tax records, 1846, Blair County
Carson Valley Cemetery, Carson Valley,
Cemeteries of Bald Eagle Township, Beech Creek Township and Beech Creek Borough, Clinton
Cemeteries of Crawford, Greene and Logan townships and Loganton Borough, Clinton County (a.k.a. Sugar Valley)
Cemeteries of Freedom Township, Blair County
Church of St. Mary, Hollidaysburg, baptismal records, 1844-1920
Evangelical Lutheran Church, Duncansville, 1847-1968
Fairview Cemetery, Altoona, PA
First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Altoona, Blair County, 1857-1915 baptisms, marriages & deaths
Grandview Cemetery, Tyrone
Hickey-O'Neill Funeral Home records, Altoona, 1897-1911
Historical collections relating to Gwynedd: a township of Montgomery County, settled in 1698 by Welsh immigrants
Hollidaysburg Presbyterian Cemetery
Lafferty & Tobias Funeral Home, Altoona: from mortuary records, April 16, 1907–Dec. 31, 1918
Logan Valley Presbyterian Church, Bellwood, 1899-1953
Lutheran Cemetery, Newry
McFarland Funeral Home records, Hollidaysburg, 1837-1932
Rosehill Cemetery, Logan Township, Blair 2 vols
Saint John's Cemetery, Altoona,
St. Mary's Church records, Altoona, deaths & marriages, 1862-1888

Pennsylvania (continued)

Sinking Valley Presbyterian Church, Sinking Valley
Some Blair County, cemeteries in Hollidaysburg Borough: Green Lawn, Holliday-Jackson, old & new St. Mary's, Union
Stevens Mortuary, Altoona: from mortuary records, July 16, 1883 - December 31, 1910
Trinity United Methodist Church, Roaring Springs,
Tyrone Township cemeteries, Blair County
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church records, Hollidaysburg & Frankstown, 1824-1923
Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Williamsburg, 1837-1929

South Carolina

Lexington area cemeteries

Virginia

1835 gazetteer of Virginia and the District of Columbia
Alleghany County, Covington, birth records. multiple volumes
Black laws of Virginia: a summary of the legislative acts of Virginia concerning Negroes from earliest times to present
Cavaliers and pioneers: abstracts of Virginia land patents and grants: Volume VIII, 1779-1782
Cavaliers and pioneers: abstracts of Virginia land patents and grants: supplement, Northern Neck grants No. 1, 1690-1692
Deed and will abstracts, Stafford County: 1686-89
Deed and will abstracts, Stafford County: 1689-93
Deed and will abstracts, Stafford County: 1722-28, 1755-1765
Deed and will abstracts, Stafford County: 1780-86; scheme book: 1790-93
Deed and will abstracts, Stafford County: 1809-10
Deed and will abstracts, Stafford County: 1810-13
Deed and will abstracts, Stafford County: 1825-26
Hollywood Cemetery: a history of a Southern shrine
A list of places included in 19th century Virginia directories
Order book abstracts, Stafford County:1664-68, 1689-90
Order book abstracts, Stafford County: 1691-92
Order book abstracts, Stafford County: 1692-93
Parish lines, Diocese of Southern Virginia
Parish lines, Diocese of Southwestern Virginia
Stafford County, land tax books: 1782-1792
Stafford County, will book: 1748-1767
Survey of various cemeteries of Alleghany County
Virginia: a guide to the Old Dominion
Virginia county records: Westmoreland County
Virginia in maps: four centuries of settlement, growth and development
Wills, inventories and appraisement bills of Alleghany County, 1822-1876
Women of mark: a history of the Woman's Club of Richmond

West Virginia

Logan County, births & deaths. 2 books. 1872-1906
Logan County, marriages. 3 books. 1872-1923
Our Monongalia: a history of African Americans in Monongalia

Family History

The descendants of Henry Young: our immigrant ancestor, vol. 1

Military

Camps and campaigns of the 107th Regiment of the Ohio Volunteer Infantry from August 1862 to July, 1865
The history of Philip's War: commonly called the Great Indian War of 1675-1676 also the French and Indian Wars at Eastward in 1689, 1690, 1692, 1696 and 1704
Presidential libraries holdings relating to prisoners of war and missing in action
Westmoreland in the Revolution: eyewitness accounts of those who served

New England

Female index to Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England
Perished in flames: victims of deadly fires in New England newspapers & diaries, 1675-1830

Reference

Family history cultures and faiths: how your ancestors lived and worshipped
Handbook of oral history

Belgium

Searching for Flemish ancestors

Special Collections Division
Akron-Summit County Public Library
60 South High Street
Akron, Ohio 44326

Ireland
How to trace your Irish ancestors: an essential guide
The people of Ireland, 1600-1699: Part One

Italy
Italians to America: lists of passengers arriving at U.S. ports. Vols. 23-26

Native Americans
The 1880 Cherokee Nation census, Indian Territory (Oklahoma)

Scotland
Scottish Highlanders on the eve of the great migration, 1725-1755: the northern highlands

Genealogies
Early families of Raymond, Maine

Online Survey

Special Collections is interested in what you have to say. We are conducting an online survey to find out what resources are most important to you. We want to know what types of new books, databases, or services you would like us to offer.

Please take a moment to complete the survey - http://www.akronlibrary.org/internetresources/sc/sc_survey.html.

Akron-Summit County Public Library